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Drugs, dogs seized in Muncie raids

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MUNCIE -- A federal sting operation Wednesday triggered eight city-wide narcotics raids and the discovery of drugs, cash, guns and pit bulls.

In all, police confiscated an estimated \$20,000 in cash, 10 pounds of marijuana, a pound of cocaine and three handguns, arrested six people on drug-related felony charges, and rescued 25 pitbull dogs, including 16 puppies.

The arrests, Delaware County Drug Task Force Sgt. Jess Neal said, will have an effect on drug trafficking locally.

"There's always going to be drugs in Delaware County," he said. "But the big deal for today was who was arrested."

The sweep started about 5 a.m. when officers from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Muncie police and Delaware County sheriff's deputies arrested two men as they tried to commit a robbery of what they believed to be 20 kilograms of cocaine, according to the U.S. Attorney's office for the Southern District of Indiana.

The attempted robbery occurred at an alleged "stash" house along North Wheeling Avenue, authorities said.

Christopher Lampkins, 24, and Reginald Lipscomb, 32, both of Muncie, were charged with federal drug and weapons charges that could result in life prison sentences, Assistant U.S. Attorney Barry Glickman said in a press release.

The men are the main suspects in a series of home invasion robberies this fall that resulted in the slaying of Phillip McKillip, 26, at his home in the city's Aultshire addition, and two non-fatal shootings at a northside apartment complex, MPD detective Al Williams said. Muncie police had not yet formally interrogated Lampkins and Lipscomb, who were transported to the Marion County Jail by federal authorities.

After the arrest of Lampkins and Lipscomb, city and county SWAT teams initiated drug raids at homes throughout the city that lasted until early Wednesday afternoon.

The homes had been targets in a long investigation by local narcotics officers, Neal said.

Police conducted the federal arrests and struck the homes in a single day to prevent suspects from tipping each other off. "In the dope trade, everybody is connected one way or another," Neal said.

Police are still looking for three men and a woman who escaped arrest in the raids.

The marijuana and cocaine police seized would have an estimated street value of around \$33,000, according to Neal.

At 1420 E. Centennial Ave., police found seven adult pitbulls guarding a 10-pound brick of marijuana, Neal said.

One of those dogs charged at SWAT officers as they entered the home and was shot and killed.

Animal control officers transported the remaining pitbulls to the city animal shelter.

Some of the adults were scarred and wearing large collars with short sections of heavy chain attached, signs of possible fighting, animal control officer Bob Patterson said.

The sudden influx of dogs, some of them aggressive, created space problems for the shelter, which spent \$250 on plastic dog houses Wednesday to keep some of the animals in enclosed outdoor kennels, Supt. Karen Gibson said.

"The problem with pitbulls is you can't house them in groups, except for the puppies," Gibson said. The future of the animals is unclear and it is possible that some might be euthanized.